DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 469 CG 024 811

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TITLE Using Education To Modify Students' Attitudes toward Rape.
PUB DATE Aug 92
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (100th, Washington, DC, August 14-18, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Higher Education; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Prevention; *Rape; Sex Differences; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The prevalence of rape points to a need for effective prevention strategies. Ultimately, however, preventing rape necessitates changing men's attitudes and behavior. This study investigated the effects of a lecture aimed at changing the attitudes of men. Also investigated were the effects of lecturer sex (male, female, or male-female team or no one--the no-lecture control condition) and lecture focus (blaming men or society for rape) on men's and women's attitudes toward rape. Participants were 229 men and 259 women enrolled in General Psychology classes. Questionnaires, which were submitted to all four groups about a month later for a seemingly unrelated study, included Burt's Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale, Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale, Rape Myths Acceptance Scale, and Muehlenhard and Felts' Sexual Beliefs Scale. The classes received a lecture on rape as a normal part of the course; the lecture was given during regular class time and the students were unaware that the lecture was part of the study. Students rated the male lecturers as being more effective and fair than the female lecturers. Female students rated the lecturer as more fair and effective than did males, and females thought that men needed to change more than did males. Students who heard the lecture had attitudes that were significantly less tolerant of rape than did the no-lecture control classes. Both the sex of the lecturer and the type of the lecture had small and inconsistent effects. Females had attitudes that were less supportive of various rape myths than did males. (ABL)

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Using Education to Modify Students' Attitudes Toward Rape

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Using Education to Modify Students' Attitudes Toward Rape

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According to recent studies, one in four women will be raped during her lifetime (Russell, 1984). The prevalence of rape points to a need for effective prevention strategies. Unfortunately, many prevention strategies focus on what women should do to prevent rape. Ultimately, however, preventing rape necessitates changing men's attitudes and behavior.

This study investigated the effects of a lecture aimed at changing the attitudes of men. We also investigated the effects of lecturer sex (male, female, or a male-female team) and lecture focus (blaming men or society for rape) on men's and women's attitudes toward rape.

Method

Participants

Participants were 229 men and 259 women who were enrolled in General Psychology classes.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires were Burt's (1980) Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale (ASB), Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale (AIV), and Rape Myths Acceptance Scale (RMA), and Muehlenhard and Felts' (1987) Sexual Beliefs Scale, which consists of the Token Refusal (TR), Leading on Justifies Force (LJF), Women Like Force (WLF), Men Should Dominate (MSD), and No Means Stop (NMS) subscales. Scores on the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale can range from 9 to 63 and represent the extent to which respondents believe that male-female relationships are basically exploitative. Scores on the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale can range from 6 to 42 and indicate the degree to which respondents accept violence, especially against women, and the degree to which respondents

believe that it is acceptable for men to use violence against women in intimate and sexual relationships. Scores on the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale can range from 19 to 117 and represent the degree to which the respondent believes in myths about rape. Scores on each of the five Sexual Beliefs subscales can range from 0 to 12. The Token Refusal subscale measures the belief that women often pretend not to want sex when they really do in order not to appear promiscuous; the Leading on Justifies Force subscale assesses the degree to which respondents believe that women who "lead men on" deserve to have force used against them; the Women Like Force subscale measures respondents' beliefs that women like force being used against them in sexual situations; the Men Should Dominate subscale assesses beliefs in male domination over women; the No Means Stop subscale measures respondents' beliefs that when a woman says no to a man, he should stop his sexual advances.

Design

Each introductory psychology class was randomly assigned to one of four lecture conditions; that is, each class received a lecture from (a) a male, (b) a female, (c) a male-female team, or (d) no one (the no-lecture control condition). In addition, each class was randomly assigned to one of two lecture focuses: (a) a lecture that blamed society for rape (the societal-blame condition) or (b) a lecture that blamed men for rape (the male-blame condition). In addition to investigating the effects of lecturer and lecture focus, the current study examined the effects of the participants' sex.

Procedure

The classes received a lecture on rape as a normal part of the course; the lecture was given during a regularly scheduled class time, and the students were unaware that the lecture was part of a study. All of the lectures emphasized men's responsibility in preventing rape and the need for men to change their behavior. Half of the lectures placed the blame for rape on males, and half placed the blame on society. For example, both of the lectures contained information about how miscommunication could lead to rape. However, the societal-blame lecture contained the statement, "Research has shown that men interpret behavior more sexually than women," whereas the male-blame lecture contained the statement, "Research has shown that MEN misinterpret women's behavior;

men interpret women's behavior too sexually." All of the lectures contained the same factual information. Subjects in the no-lecture control condition received no lecture until the study was over. The lectures were delivered by male, female, or male-female teams of graduate students. Experimental versus control conditions, speaker sex, and lecture focus were all randomly determined.

After the lecture, students rated the speaker on clarity, interestingness, effectiveness, and fairness. They also indicated the extent to which they thought men, women, and society should change to prevent rape.

Four weeks later, undergraduate assistants went to the classes and administered questionnaires on attitudes toward rape for a seemingly unrelated study.

Results and Conclusions

Students' Evaluations of the Lectures

As shown in Table 1, students rated the male lecturers as being more effective and fair than the female lecturers. Students who heard the lecture from a male thought that men needed to change more and women needed to change less than did students who heard the lecture from a female. Female students rated the lecturer as more fair and effective than did males, and females thought that men needed to change more than did males.

Effectiveness of the Lectures

Students who heard the lecture had attitudes that were significantly less tolerant of rape than did the no-lecture control classes (see Table 2). Both the sex of the lecturer and the type of the lecture had small and inconsistent effects. Females had attitudes that were less supportive of various rape myths than did males.

This study suggests that informing students about rape has a positive effect lasting at least four weeks. Who gives the talk and the focus of the talk are unimportant, provided that the iecture stresses the need for men to change their behavior. Requiring students to hear rape lectures is one of many changes universities should make to reduce the risk of rape on campus.

References

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Table 1

Mean Scores on Student Evaluations

	Lecturer				Subject Sex		
	Female	Male	Male/Female Team		Female	Male	
Clear	5.74_a	5.70_a	5.79_a		5.86_a	5.60_a	
Interesting	5.52_a	5.22_a	5.39_a		5.48_a	5.23_a	
Effective	4.82_a	5.56_b	5.15_a	**	5.41_a	4.93_b	*
Fair	4.27_a	5.55_b	5.28_b	****	5.45_a	4.63_b	****
Change							
men	6.03_a	6.35_b	6.21_{ab}	*	6.41_a	5.96_b	****
women	5.07_a	4.18_b	4.70_a	***	4.68_a	4.54_a	
society	6.39_a	6.35_a	6.20_a		6.40_a	6.19_a	

Note. Scores on clarity, interest, fairness, and fairness could range from very poor (1) to very good (7). Scores on change could range from little change (1) to much change (7). Means with different subscripts differ at the $p < .05$ level.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. ****$p < .0001$.

Table 2

Mean Scores on Scales Assessing Attitudes and Beliefs about Rape

	Lecturer					Lecture Focus		Student Sex		
Scale	No-lecture control	Female	Male	Male/female team		Male Blame	Societal Blame	Female	Male	
ASB[a]	27.59_a	23.88_b	23.44_b	23.69_b	*	25.15_a	23.79_a	22.20_a	27.08_b	****
AIV[b]	17.62_a	14.77_b	14.73_b	14.40_b	****	15.49_a	14.96_a	14.08_a	16.55_b	****
RMA[c]	42.29_a	36.79_b	35.80_b	35.78_b	*	36.86_a	37.83_a	33.97_a	41.30_b	****
TR[d]	5.29_a	3.37_b	2.87_b	3.14_b	****	3.48_a	3.64_a	3.09_a	4.11_b	**
LJF[e]	2.46_a	1.28_b	1.43_b	1.26_b	**	1.62_a	1.48_a	1.08_a	2.09_b	****
WLF[f]	3.86_a	2.10_b	2.14_b	2.08_b	****	2.42_a	2.49_a	1.92_a	3.08_b	****
MSD[g]	4.09_a	2.42_b	2.81_b	2.59_b	**	3.19_a	2.62_b	2.09_a	3.84_b	****
NMS[h]	10.96_a	11.28_{ab}	11.58_b	11.20_{ab}		11.27_a	11.28_a	11.57_a	10.92_b	****

Note. Greater scores reflect greater acceptance of each attitude. Means with different subscripts differ at the $p < .05$ level.

[a] ASB = Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale. Range = 9 to 63.

[b] AIV = Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale. Range = 6 to 42.

[c] RMA = Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Range = 19 to 117.

[d] TR = Token Refusal. Range = 0 to 12.

[e] LJF = Leading on Justifies Force. Range = 0 to 12.

[f] WLF = Women Like Force. Range = 0 to 12.

[g] MSD = Men Should Dominate. Range = 0 to 12.

[h] NMS = No Means Stop. Range = 0 to 12.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. ****$p < .0001$.